

## CHAPTER 11

# History, Culture, Education & the Arts

## Introduction

**H**istory, culture, education, and the arts exert a strong and important influence on Lynchburg's quality of life. The City's image and unique sense of place, as well as its attractiveness to visitors and newcomers, are inextricably tied to the condition of its historic resources, the quality and diversity of educational opportunities, and the vitality of its arts and cultural institutions. These assets can help attract and retain businesses that seek cities with a high quality of life.

The City should identify and conserve its sensitive historic and cultural resources, expand local preservation incentives and educational programs, and require the sensitive treatment of public spaces and facilities in historic areas. The City also needs to engage in active promotion of heritage tourism and the expansion of efforts to strengthen local networks of arts, cultural, and educational organizations.

## Context & Recommendations

### *History & Culture*

#### **Preservation Threats & Challenges**

Lynchburg is fortunate to have a significant collection of historic sites, buildings, and neighborhoods—from the Downtown and the City's early residential districts to special sites like the Old City Cemetery, Point of Honor, and the Anne Spencer House—as well as areas recognized for their special architectural and urban character. These places provide a strong foundation for future planning, offering tangible symbols of the City's colorful past and enduring models for the creation of new buildings, neighborhoods, and commercial areas.



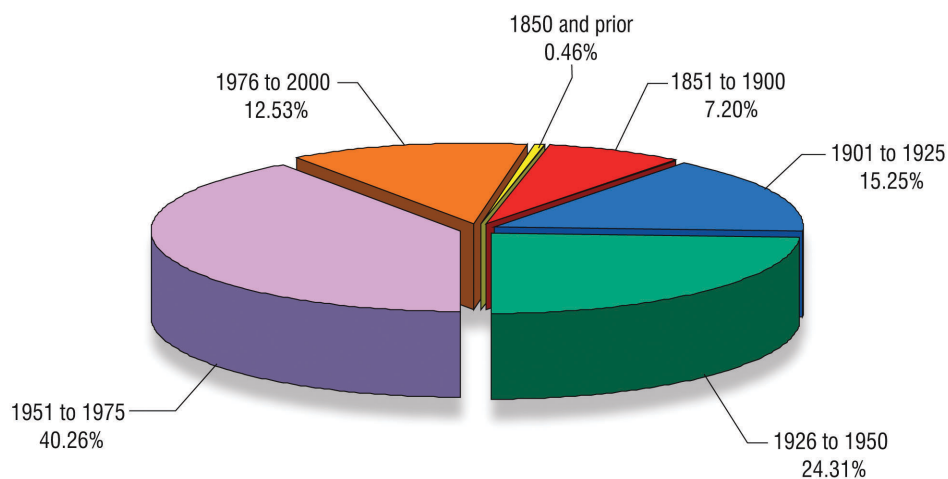
**Old City Cemetery**

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As one of the Commonwealth's older independent cities, Lynchburg is home to an impressive number of pre-World War II residential and commercial structures. According to tax assessment data, nearly half of the City's houses are at least 50 years old, and approximately 1,750 were built in 1900 or earlier. The downtown and surrounding historic neighborhoods contain the highest percentage of houses in the City constructed prior to 1850 (81%), between 1851 and 1900 (75%), and between 1901 and 1925 (40%).

**Table 11.1. Age of Housing**

Age of Housing	Number of Houses	Percent of Total
1850 and prior	104	0.4
1851 to 1900	1638	7.2
1901 to 1925	3472	15.2
1926 to 1950	5533	24.3
1951 to 1975	9163	40.3
1976 to 2000	2851	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>22761</b>	<b>100.0</b>

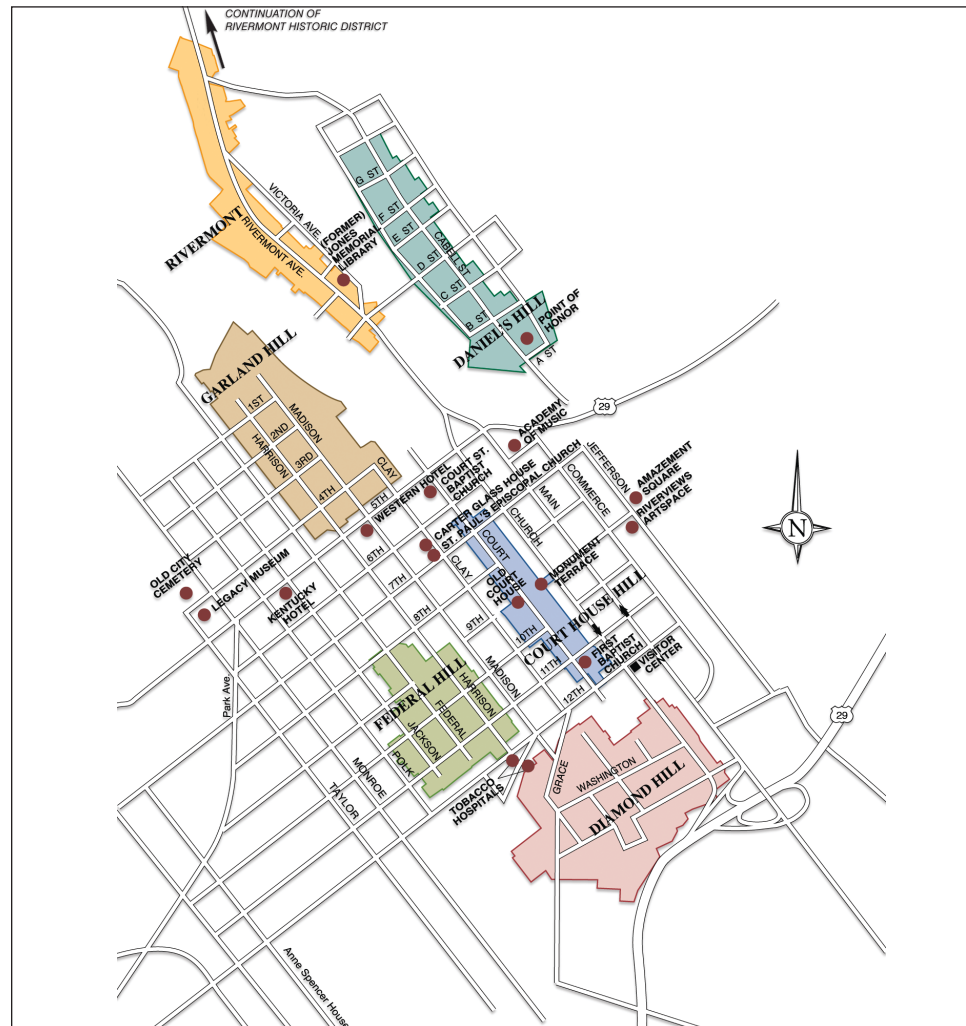


**The presence of older neighborhoods and the commercial areas that grew up to serve them presents both opportunities and challenges, especially for a city experiencing growth pressures at its edges, but not closer in. Some of the most pressing issues include:**

- Uneven maintenance and upkeep of properties with pockets of significant deterioration;
- A generally weak market for investment in older areas of the City that are not historically designated;
- The absence of mechanisms in areas outside of historic districts to ensure sensitive renovations, infill development, and public improvements;
- Inappropriate zoning and inflexible building code provisions, some of which may serve as barriers to preservation; and
- Limited knowledge of existing preservation assistance programs.

## Historic Districts

Since the completion of the first major survey of historic resources and the adoption of the Historic District Ordinance in 1978, City regulation has played a central role in supporting the preservation of locally significant historic sites and districts. The Historic District Ordinance provided for the designation of sites and districts, the creation of a review board, the development of design guidelines, and the establishment of review procedures. Revisions to the Ordinance were adopted by City Council in July 2001.



**Lynchburg's locally designated Historic Districts.**

Nancy Blackwell, The Design Group

Under the ordinance, individually designated properties and those located within historic districts are protected from inappropriate or insensitive alteration. The Ordinance requires the issuance of a certificate of appropriateness either administratively or by the Historic Preservation Commission before a building can be erected, reconstructed, restored, demolished, or altered in any way that affects its external appearance.

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Currently, there are six locally designated historic districts and thirteen individually designated historic properties in Lynchburg. The historic districts—Court House Hill, Daniel’s Hill, Diamond Hill, Garland Hill, Federal Hill, and Rivermont—contain approximately 750 of the City’s most significant historic buildings. Individual sites include the Academy of Music Theater, the Anne Spencer House, and the Old City Cemetery. With few exceptions, these districts and properties are listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the U.S. Department of the Interior’s National Register of Historic Places.

**Table 11.2: Historic Sites**

<b>Individual Properties</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>National Register of Historic Places</b>	<b>Virginia Landmarks Register</b>	<b>Local Register of Historic Places</b>
Academy of Music	522-526 Main Street	06/11/69	11/05/68	02/14/78
Allied Arts Building	725 Church Street	12/19/85	04/16/85	
Anne Spencer House	1313 Pierce Street	12/06/76	09/21/76	02/14/78
Bragassa Toy Store	323-325 12th Street	01/11/91	08/22/90	
Carter Glass House	605 Clay Street	12/08/76	02/15/77	02/14/78
College Hill Baptist Church	1101 Floyd Street			05/08/84
Court Street Baptist Church	523 Court Street	07/08/82	06/16/81	09/08/81
First Baptist Church		09/09/82	04/21/81	09/08/81
Fort Early	3511 Memorial Avenue			08/11/98
Hopwood Hall, Lynchburg College Campus	Lakeside Drive			09/09/80
Jones Memorial Library	434 Rivermont Avenue	10/30/80	07/31/80	
Kentucky Hotel	900 Fifth Street	12/11/86	06/17/86	
Locust Grove	US 501 South Side	12/17/92	10/92	
Main Hall, Randolph-Macon Woman’s College	2500 Rivermont Avenue	06/19/79	02/26/79	
Miller-Claytor House Treasure Island Road	Miller-Claytor Lane	05/06/76	10/21/75	04/11/78
Miller Park Aviary	402 Grove Street	07/30/80	04/15/80	05/22/79
Montview (Carter Glass Estate)	Liberty University Campus			
Old City Cemetery	Taylor & Fourth Street	04/02/73	09/19/72	
Old Court House	901 Court Street	05/19/72	04/18/72	02/14/78
Point of Honor	112 Cabell Street	02/26/70	12/02/69	02/14/78
Rosedale	Old Graves Mill Road	07/07/83	10/82	
Saint Paul’s Vestry House	308 7th Street	02/21/97		
Sandusky House	757 Sandusky Drive	07/26/82	02/16/82	
South River Meeting House (Quaker Meeting House)	5810 Fort Avenue	08/28/75	05/20/75	04/11/78
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church	605 Clay Street	09/09/82	04/21/81	09/08/81
Samuel Miller House	1433 Nelson Drive	11/12/92	1992	07/14/92
VA Episcopal School	400 VA Episcopal School Rd.	10/28/92	1992	
Warwick House	720 Court Street	12/06/96		
Western Hotel (Joseph Nichol’s Tavern (NRHP))	501 Madison Street	07/22/74	06/18/74	02/14/78
J.W. Wood Building	23-27 Ninth Street	02/17/83	05/18/82	

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Several areas have been identified as eligible for local historic district designation, including the Downtown, the Lower Basin, and the Diamond Hill South and College Hill neighborhoods, among others.

### **Design Advisory Districts**

In addition to locally designated historic districts and sites, the City has established Historic District Advisory Areas along Church, Main, Commerce, and Jefferson Streets in the Downtown. All proposals to erect, reconstruct, restore, demolish, or alter the external appearance of a building within the Advisory Area are reviewed by the Design Review Board for compliance with guidelines published in the report *Commercial Historic District Guidelines: Lynchburg, Virginia*. Upon completion of their review, the Board prepares an advisory finding of conformity or non-conformity with the guidelines. Applicants are required to submit plans for review—building or demolition permits may not be issued until the Board issues its recommendations—but compliance with the Board’s recommendations while strongly encouraged is not required.

Questions have been raised about the utility of an “advisory only” process for the Downtown, arguably the most visible of the City’s areas of distinctive character. Although some applicants follow the Board’s recommendations, several projects have not.

City staff should complete an assessment of compliance with the recommendations of the Design Review Board for the Historic District Advisory Areas. Working with the Design Review Board and Downtown stakeholders, including property owners and tenants, the Historic Preservation and Planning Commissions, Lynch’s Landing, and local preservation advocacy groups, staff should develop measures of effectiveness, evaluate conformance with recommendations, and offer recommendations for appropriate changes to the program.

### **Historic Preservation Incentives, Advocacy & Education**

In partnership with local and regional preservation, tourism development, and community improvement organizations, the City actively promotes preservation and resource conservation and educates the community about existing assistance and incentive programs and initiatives. A recent collaboration between the City of Lynchburg Department of Community Planning & Development, the Lynchburg Historical Foundation, Inc., and the Diamond Hill Historical Society, Inc. resulted in the publication of the report, *Incentives and Assistance for Real Estate Rehabilitation*, a thorough resource for owners and developers of older properties.

Expanding the pool of incentives and increasing awareness of the benefits of preservation can help build community support for further work and the

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development of new partnerships. For example, local lending institutions may be willing to develop products tailored to support the purchase and rehabilitation of historic structures or a small-scale loan program targeted to low- and moderate-income homeowners in historic areas that may provide the means for modest renovations and repairs.

The City should expand its ongoing efforts to raise awareness of preservation-related regulations and financial incentives. Such a program, involving workshops, brochures, web-based outreach, and other efforts, should help developers, realtors, homeowners, and potential property owners better understand the benefits of preservation and the resources available to support it.

**Building Codes & Zoning Standards Affecting Historic Preservation**

The City anticipates state adoption of the International Building Code and the International Existing Building Code early in 2003. These two codes will give building officials much more flexibility for handling renovations to historic and older structures. At the time the Zoning Ordinance is rewritten, care should be taken to allow flexibility in interpretation of requirements for older structures.

In addition, Chapter 10, Neighborhoods & Housing, includes recommendations for the creation of a new Traditional Residential Overlay district that recognizes the unique physical character of the City's older residential areas and promotes sensitive infill development.

**Historic City-Owned Properties**

The City should also develop and follow design guidelines for City-owned property and public facilities located in and around the City's Historic Districts and potential conservation areas. Citizens who participated in development of the Plan goals felt strongly that the City should set a good example by preserving and protecting City-owned buildings and properties.



**Aviary in Miller Park.**

## Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is a central element in the region's economic development efforts. According to research conducted by the tourism industry, the typical heritage tourist shops more, spends more, stays in hotels more often, travels longer, and visits more destinations than typical travelers. These tourists are often referred to as "high-yield" tourists; fewer tourists spending more money and providing a high economic return. Communities that have preserved their historic buildings and rural landscapes—which tell compelling stories about their history and culture and provide opportunities for "outsiders" to experience the uniqueness of a region—are particularly successful at attracting heritage tourists, often for repeat visits.

The City is a logical destination for the heritage tourist. Central Virginia is home to an impressive array of important historic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources. Lynchburg's location on the James, its wealth of local resources and special events, and its proximity to nationally significant historic sites, such as the National D-Day Memorial, Appomattox Courthouse National Historical Park, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Patrick Henry's Red Hill, and the Booker T. Washington National Monument, make it an especially attractive place from which to experience the region's special places.

An expanded emphasis on heritage tourism efforts offers genuine opportunities for both the cultural and tourism industries to work together and, over time, to build business, stimulate economic growth, showcase resources, and encourage visitors to explore the City and the region.

### **Several projects provide excellent models of collaborative action:**

- New venues like the Legacy Museum of African American History will deepen appreciation for local history and heritage;
- The Region 2000 Regional Commission's recently completed wayfinding study, along with recommendations in the Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan 2000, lay the groundwork for a new system of signs guiding locals and visitors to important destinations; and
- The Lynchburg Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau's new publications provide excellent introductory information on the City's historic districts and the region's African-America Heritage.

A collaborative approach is required to expand understanding of the City's history and heritage and to increase local and regional appreciation of the important role culture and the arts play in supporting the City's livability and economic vitality.



**Legacy Museum**

## ***Education***

Throughout the public forums held for the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan, citizens emphasized the value they place on education. Quality educational opportunities must be provided for youth at the secondary school level and college level and for adults as part of continuing education. Many expressed an interest in having the City promote a community culture of life-long learning. Maintaining and improving the quality of the Lynchburg Public Schools' education program is essential because school quality has an impact on so many other aspects of Lynchburg, including the skill level of the workforce, the stability of neighborhoods, and the availability of recreational and educational facilities, among others. The City supports education by providing a public school system that strives for excellence.

The City School System's physical plant is described in Chapter 16, Public Facilities, where the need to renovate and update school facilities is highlighted. So that these schools play a role in adult life-long learning, Chapter 13, Parks & Recreation, discusses the need for City school facilities to be made available for evening continuing education classes sponsored by the Parks & Recreation Department for both adults and children.

The City is blessed with five institutions of higher learning: Central Virginia Community College, Liberty University, Lynchburg College, Virginia University of Lynchburg, and Randolph-Macon Woman's College. These institutions offer opportunities to earn advanced degrees, for career training, and for general continuing education. The City places high value on these educational resources and will continue to support their presence within the City and to work with them in coordinating City planning with campus master planning and facilities development, as discussed further in Chapter 16. In addition, the faculties of these schools bring a wealth of knowledge and skills that the City hopes to continue to tap. For example, as discussed in Chapter 12, Natural Systems, the City hopes to use university expertise to help chart a new path toward sustainable development. And as discussed in the next section, these colleges and universities play an important role in fostering and presenting artistic endeavors in the City.



**Panorama of Central Virginia Community College.**

## ***The Arts***

Lynchburg contains a vibrant arts community from individual artists, to performing arts groups, to galleries, to performing arts presenters. Citizens enjoy the opportunity to participate in and attend performances of the Lynchburg Symphony, the Dance Theatre of Lynchburg, the Lynchburg Regional Ballet Theatre, and the Jefferson Choral Society, for example. They can visit many local galleries, including the Lynchburg Fine Arts Center, the Daura Gallery at Lynchburg College, and the Maier Museum of Art at Randolph-Macon Woman's College. Citizens can take classes in the arts at the Lynchburg Fine Arts Center, the Virginia School of the Arts, and other venues, as well as through the City's Department of Parks and Recreation. The City hosts many arts performances at E.C. Glass High School, though the City's major presenters are the Lynchburg Fine Arts Center, Lynchburg College, Randolph-Macon Woman's College, and The Academy of Music.

The Academy of Music is the City's historic theater. Opened in 1905, it closed in 1958. In its heyday, the theater hosted such artists as Will Rogers, Sarah Bernhardt, Eubie Blake and George M. Cohen. The Academy of Music Theatre, Inc., formed to renovate and bring performances back to the theater. The goal of the Academy of Music Performing Arts Center is to open in 2005, the 100th anniversary of its original opening. In the meantime, the Academy presents a full schedule of arts performances at other local venues, including E.C. Glass High School and Randolph-Macon Woman's College.



**Academy of Music in Downtown.**

During the planning process, community leaders emphasized the importance of building a strong network of allied organizations—City and regional agencies; community—based arts, heritage, and preservation groups; and local schools and colleges—to encourage on-going communication, improve access to information, open lines of communication, and leverage resources. Expanding partnerships and collaborations, and strengthening existing networks of support for the advancement of local and regional heritage tourism, arts, and cultural initiatives is also essential.

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The City could play a powerful role as bridge-builder, facilitator, and supporter of local programs and initiatives by assisting in the creation of a Lynchburg Council for the Arts and Culture.

## Goals, Objectives & Strategies

**Goal 1. Preserve significant historic and cultural resources through the collaborative efforts of the City; historic and cultural groups; local schools and colleges; and other local, state, and national preservation groups and organizations.**

**Objective 1.A. Structures & Sites.** Expand efforts to survey, document, and preserve historic sites and structures in the City.

- 1) Determine areas or sites potentially eligible for local, state, or national listing or those eligible for rehabilitation tax credits or other benefits and conduct an analysis of building age, condition, and other data available through the Tax Assessor, Census Bureau, and other sources.
- 2) Develop guidelines, standards, and review procedures for the treatment of older structures and sites located outside of designated historic districts.

**Objective 1.B. Financial Incentives.** Expand financial incentives to encourage preservation.

- 1) Support efforts to increase the pool of funds available to property owners in historic districts under the Lynchburg Historical Foundation's revolving loan program.
- 2) Expand programs to provide financial assistance to low and moderate-income residents in historic districts for renovation and/or rehabilitation. For example, explore the feasibility of developing a micro-loan or grant program for small-scale repairs and maintenance.
- 3) Encourage local lending institutions to develop loan products tailored to support the purchase and rehabilitation of historic structures.
- 4) Determine the effectiveness of the City's existing property tax relief program for significant investment in the rehabilitation or renovation of older houses.
- 5) Seek additional resources from the state and federal government and foundations to support local efforts to protect and preserve historic properties.

**Goal 2. Increase access to information concerning local history and culture, as well as the value and benefits of preserving sensitive historic resources.**

**Objective 2.A. Awareness of Regulations.** Increase awareness of preservation-related development regulations and financial incentives among members of the development community and the local real estate industry.

- 1) Sponsor annual or biannual preservation workshops for owners of property in historic districts to share information about financial incentives and development regulations, review issues with existing programs, and celebrate success stories.
- 2) Continue to update print and web-based material summarizing preservation-related regulations and incentive programs.
- 3) Sponsor workshops for developers, realtors, and relocation/human resource personnel that focus on the benefits of investment in historic properties and highlight incentives.

**Objective 2.B. Community Awareness.** Increase community awareness of local history and culture, as well as the value and benefits of preservation efforts.

- 1) Seek grant funding to complete a study of the economic impacts of historic district designations.

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- 2) Explore the feasibility of developing additional print pieces, maps, and brochures introducing residents and visitors to the City's unique resources.
- 3) Encourage the development of K-12 and college level courses and educational activities that build awareness of local history and heritage.

**Goal 3. Ensure that future development, redevelopment, and public improvements complement the scale and character, and respect the integrity of, designated historic districts and areas potentially eligible for designation.**

**Objective 3.A. Disincentives.** Identify and amend ordinances, review procedures, and policies that serve as disincentives to preservation and sensitive development or redevelopment.

- 1) Adopt development regulation provisions and policies that discourage demolition and inappropriate use of significant historic resources.
- 2) Revise local Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to ensure that regulations do not preclude or discourage sensitive infill development and redevelopment in areas potentially eligible for historic district designation.
- 3) Support statewide efforts to eliminate or change provisions in state and local building codes that act as a disincentive to rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.
- 4) Develop a checklist of factors to consider during the development review process that includes: visual impacts, historic character, and neighborhood identity.
- 5) Revise local Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to permit infill development at the same scale as existing development by right, rather than through variances.
- 6) Adopt new design standards for public utilities, public landscapes, and public streetscapes in Historic Districts that recognize their distinctive nature, support efforts to preserve them, and encourage sensitive redevelopment in the districts.

**Objective 3.B. Public Resource Conservation.** Ensure the identification, preservation, and sensitive treatment of City-owned historic buildings and sites, including historic features and design elements (e.g., lighting, walls, paving material, and curbstones) on public lands and rights-of-way.

- 1) Seek grant funding to complete a survey of City-owned property to determine historic significance.
- 2) Prepare renovation and rehabilitation plans for City-owned, historically significant properties, including City-owned properties located within or adjacent to designated historic districts, or in areas potentially eligible for designation.
- 3) To ensure sensitivity in the treatment of roads, utilities, and public facilities in and adjacent to historic sites and districts and in areas potentially eligible for designation, establish conservation and design guidelines for design elements and historic features in rights-of-way and on public land.
- 4) Plans for public improvements in and adjacent to historic sites and districts and in areas potentially eligible for designation should be presented for review by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and be made available for review by the Historic District Coalition, district property owners, and neighborhood representatives.
- 5) Support public investments to improve City entrances and conditions along the roads linking important sites and destinations.
- 6) Require agencies that receive financial incentives from the City to complete a design review process.

**Goal 4. Celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the area and promote the City and region as a destination for culture, the arts, recreation, and history.**

**Objective 4.A. Regional Efforts.** Continue support for and participation in regional heritage tourism planning and promotional efforts.

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- 1) Build on state and regional efforts to interpret the region's history, African-American heritage, Civil War heritage, and natural beauty through promotional campaigns and interpretive programs and activities.
- 2) Promote 2007 Anniversary events and the Regional James River Heritage Trail.

**Objective 4.B. Services & Attractions.** Improve existing and encourage the development of new tourist destinations, attractions, and support services.

- 1) Support the Lynchburg Area Convention and Visitors Bureau's efforts to promote culture, history, and the arts as a potential economic engine of the region.
- 2) Support regional efforts to develop a wayfinding signage system to direct visitors to important local historic, heritage, and arts destinations.
- 3) Provide new connections and improve the quality of existing connections—roads, sidewalks, and trails—between important heritage sites, natural areas, and tourist-oriented destinations.

**Goal 5. Support efforts to strengthen the capacity of individual, community-based, and regional arts, heritage, and preservation organizations.**

**Objective 5.A. Capacity.** Improve the City's role as facilitator and champion of local and regional efforts to promote preservation, the arts, and heritage development.

- 1) Encourage the creation of a Lynchburg Council for the Arts and Culture to facilitate dialogue, encourage collaboration, and provide technical support to the arts, heritage, and cultural groups and organizations.
- 2) Encourage increased collaboration between schools, colleges, and community-based and regional arts, heritage, and preservation groups.
- 3) Encourage local colleges to provide technical assistance and volunteer support to local preservation, arts, and heritage development groups and organizations.

**Goal 6. Support efforts to improve the quality of Lynchburg Public Schools.**